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Climate Anxiety: What we need to talk about when we talk about climate change

Maria Photinakis

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Climate Anxiety:

What we need to talk about when we talk about climate change



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Waltham Social Emergency Response Center (SERC), April 2019

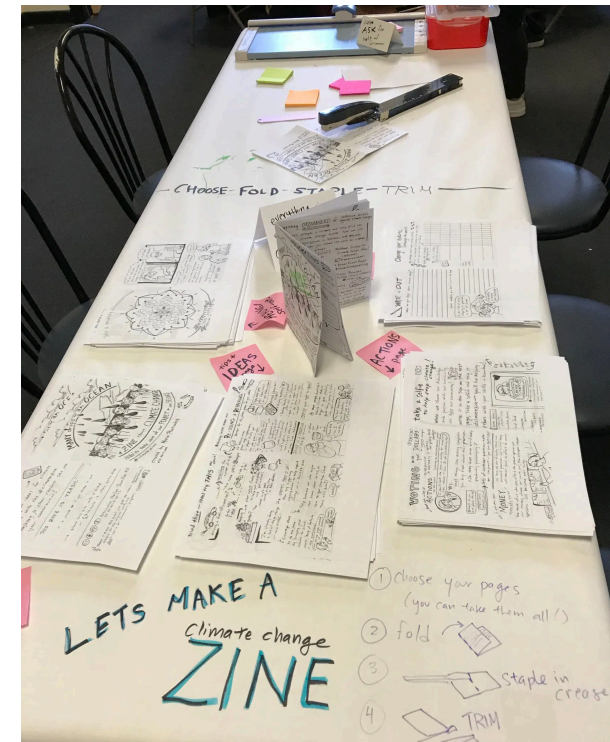
Organized by Blueprint Projects
SERC concept by Design Studio for Social Intervention (DS4SI)

Collective action, creative exploration, community engagement, and healing
 "Nourish the whole self"

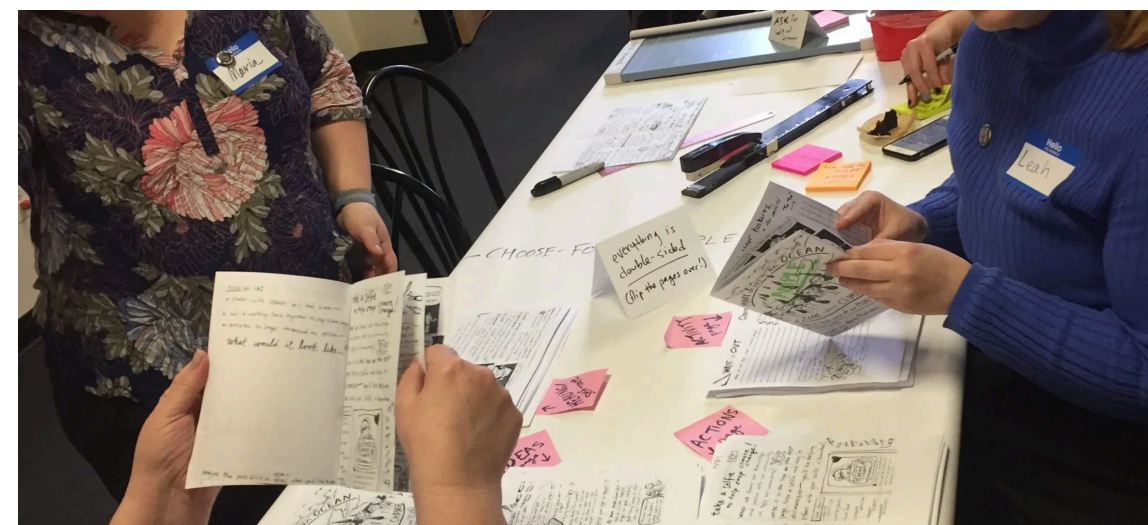




#climatezine



The zine "salad bar"



dealing with CLIMATE ANXIETY

the American
Psychological
Association



has a number of suggestions
for individuals in dealing
with climate change-
related anxiety + distress

- 1) **make + practice** household emergency plans
- 2) **participate** in mindset training to prepare for adversity + adaptation through increased awareness of our emotions (e.g. counseling)
- 3) **care** for oneself through healthy habits
- 4) **connect** with family, friends, neighbors and other groups to build strong social networks

Source: Mental health + our changing climate, March 2017

→ Connectedness, optimism, resilience
are key to keeping up the
fight for our planet!



The emotional toll of climate change:

Climate Anxiety

a.k.a.

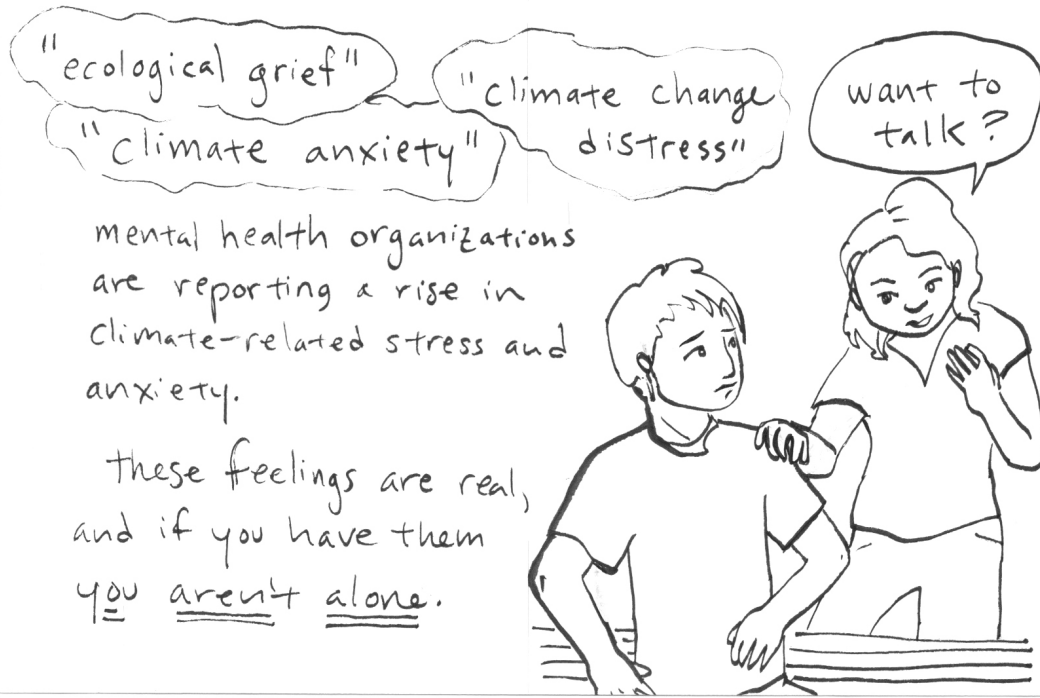
Climate Grief, Eco-Trauma

"A chronic fear of environmental doom"

— American Psychological Association,
[Mental Health and Our Changing Climate:
Impacts, Implications, and Guidance](#), 2017

Feelings of loss, helplessness, frustration, guilt
Can exacerbate existing mental illness

"Building resilience is essential to address the
physical and mental health impacts
of climate change."



Themes:

Need for broader acknowledgement that climate *anxiety* is real

- "It feels traumatic to me, but I don't want people to think I'm overreacting"
- "I'm so glad to see people finally talking about this"

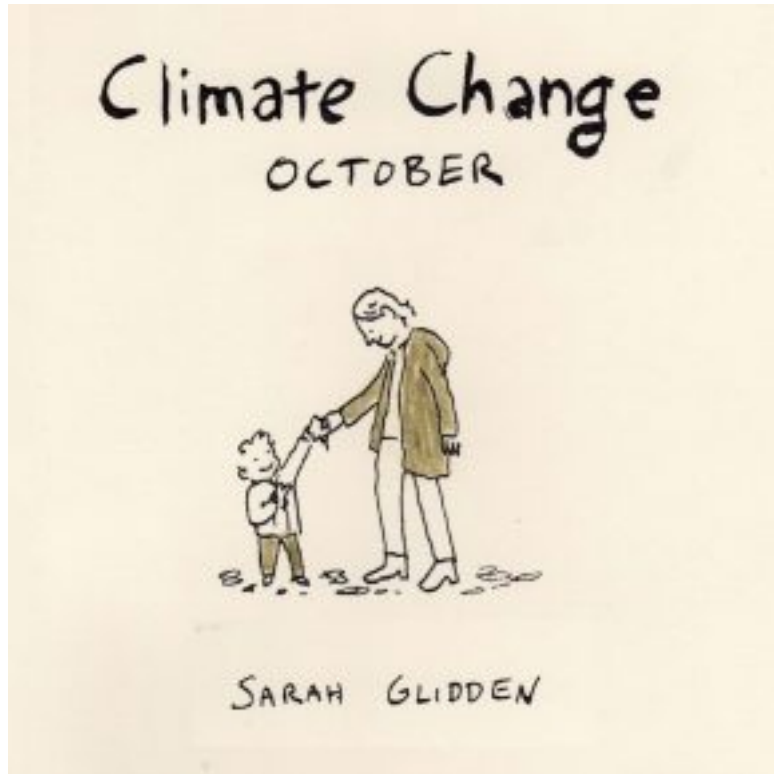
Need to feel less alone

- "Sometimes I think I'm the only person who feels this way"

Tweens & teens especially: Need for others to stop minimizing their concerns

- "My friends and all are so worried about what the future will look like"
- "My parents don't take my concerns seriously"

Comics can make connections



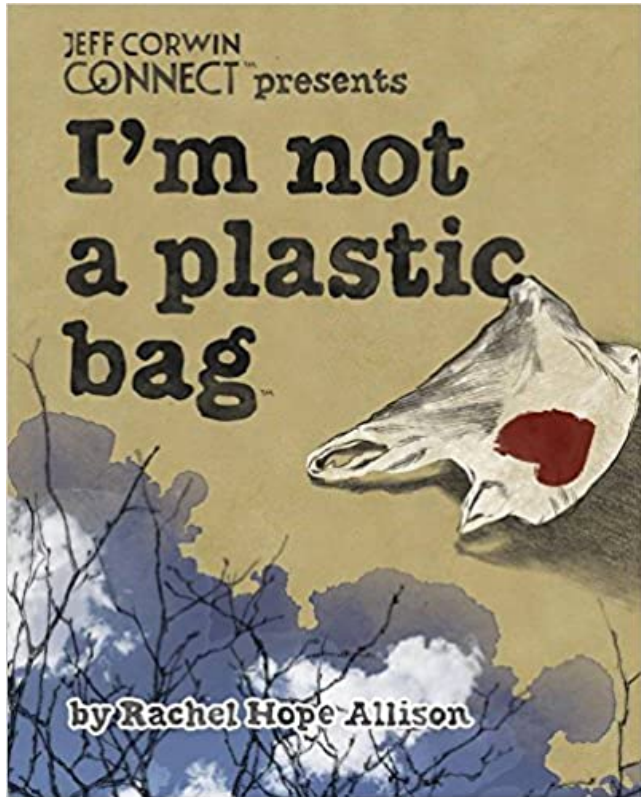
Personal narrative



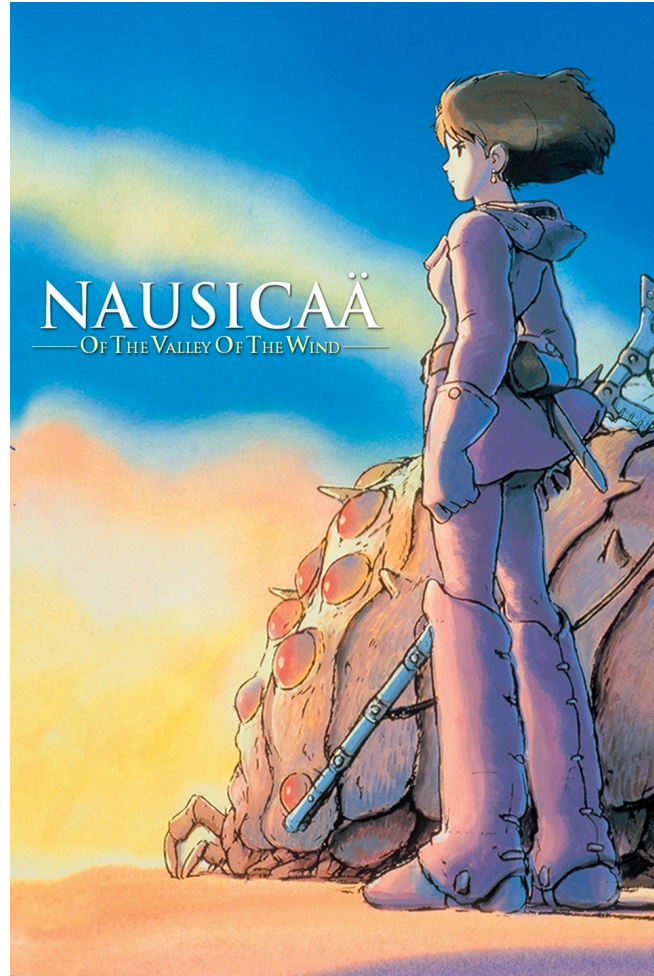
Superhero



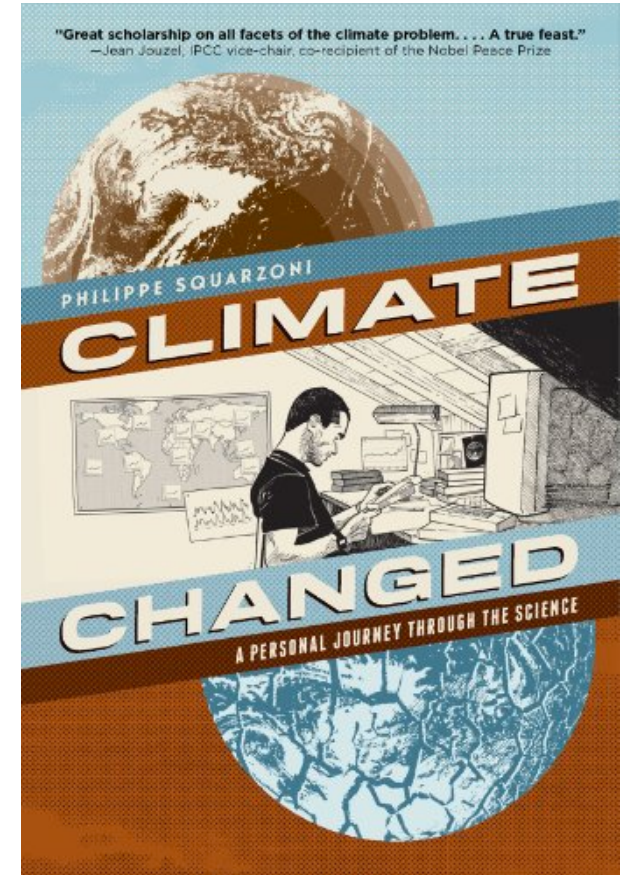
Poetry



Educational



Science fiction



Graphic novel

I'm totally overwhelmed.



It feels like an impossible problem.



And the more I research, the more I get confused.



My recycling is still being thrown out? Can I still eat almonds, or should I? Are straws really the big issue?...

I do the best I can, but—



I sometimes wonder if I'm making any difference.



Still, I'm compelled to do what I can, no matter what—



—Any effort is better than none at all.

Stopping climate change needs PARTICIPATION, not perfection.



#1

Let's talk about what's going on
AND
how it's making us feel



#2

Let's make space for mental health
when we talk about climate change
and its effects —
especially on marginalized
communities

every ASPECT of our LIVES
is — IN A SENSE —

A VOTE



We want to LIVE in.

Francis Moore Lappe

#3

Let's emphasize both individual and
community/**collective** action
to foster *resilience* and *hope*



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Thank you!

ACTION
is the
antidote
to despair
Joan
Baez